

MAY 18 1966

STATINTL

## DODD DEPOSITIONS TO BE MADE PUBLIC

### U.S. Judge Rules Against Senator in Libel Suit

Special to The New York Times  
WASHINGTON, May 17—A Federal judge overruled today a request by Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, that would have kept secret the pretrial statements of witnesses in his \$5-million libel and conspiracy suit against Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson, Washington columnists.

United States District Judge Alexander Holtzoff told John F. Sonnett, Mr. Dodd's lawyer, that the request for a court order that would have sealed the depositions of witnesses in the dispute until a trial actually began was so unusual that "I do not recall a single instance in years of even a request of this sort."

The suit may not come to trial until 1968 or 1969 because of the long backlog of untried cases in District Court here.

The judge's ruling against sealing the depositions—sworn examinations of witnesses and parties to a suit filed by opposing lawyers—was only a partial victory for Mr. Pearson and Mr. Anderson, authors of the syndicated column, "Washington Merry-Go-Round." They had urged the court to authorize that the depositions be taken in open hearings, with newsmen present.

Last Friday Judge Holtzoff rejected the columnists' contention that the depositions, including that of the Senator, should be taken in open sessions. He reiterated today his refusal to order the open questioning of any witnesses but said that transcripts of the questioning would be made public as soon as they were filed in the court.

The deposition-taking process has been a point of special interest. According to the deposition schedule laid down by Judge Holtzoff today, these informal questioning sessions will almost certainly precede—perhaps by many weeks—the open hearings promised by the Senate Select Committee on Standards and Conduct into the columnists' charges against Mr. Dodd.

The judge ordered the first three such examinations—by Mr. Sonnett of witnesses appearing for the columnists—to begin May 26. He ordered the Senator to appear next.

In a series of more than 30 syndicated reports since last January, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Anderson have asserted that Mr. Dodd, in return for favors, improperly sought to advance the special interests of lobbyists and businessmen and improperly converted campaign funds to his personal use.

In his libel complaint, filed May 6, the Senator contended that the columnists' reports, purportedly based on letters and documents taken from his Washington office, were "false, malicious and defamatory," and were designed to destroy his "occupation, reputation, comfort and public esteem."